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60発明の名称

リニア誘導モータ式搬送システム

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1. 発明の名称

リニア誘導モータ式扱送システム

- 2. 特許請求の範囲
- (1) 基準面上に支持されるように配置される支持 ローラと基準面と異なる高さのガイド面に配置 されるガイドローラとを備えた構造体と、前記 構造体の両側面に配置された一対のリニア誘導 モータと、基準面より下方に配置され、前記構 遺体に支持されるキャリアとを有する撤送台車 ٤.

各リニア誘導モータに対向して設けられた 2 次導体と、基準面で支持ローラと接し、支持ロ ーラを支持する支持部材と、ガイド面でガイド ローラと接するガイド部材を有し、分岐部にお いてはリニア誘導モータの吸引力を利用した分 岐を行うための磁性2次導体を有する搬送路と、 前配搬送路の分岐部で前記ガイド面内に配置 され、搬送路が分岐する際に、少なくとも搬送 台車の支持ローラが支持部材を離れている間、

関連するガイドローラと接して支持力を発生す る分岐部内ガイド部材と

を備えるリニア誘導モータ式搬送システム。

- (2). 請求項1 記載のリニア誘導モータ式撤送シス テムにおいて、前記搬送路は垂直部材と、該垂 直部材の下端に接続し、前記基準面内に配置さ れる第1水平都材と該垂直部材の上端に接続し、 前記ガイド面内に配置される第2水平部材とを 合む構造部材を有し、垂直部材はリニア誘導モ ータと対向する 2 次導体を有し、第 1 水平部材 の上部水平面は支持面を構成し、第2水平部材 の垂直内側端面はガイド面を構成する請求項1 記載のリニア誘導モータ式扱送システム。
- 3. 発明の詳細な説明

〔産業上の利用分野〕

本発明は、リニア誘導モータ(LIM)を利用 した搬送システムに関し、特に分岐部を有する機 退路上を搬送台車が移動する搬送システムに関す

#### [従来技術]

誘導モータを切り開いて展開した構成を有するリニア誘導モータは、給電側である1次側コイルと被給電側である2次側導体がギャップを介して対向する構造を有する。1次側に交流電流を加えての進行磁界により2次の進行磁界により2次の進行磁界により2次の進行を発生する。2次側には導体と磁性体とを組み合わせて用いるとともでき、パレット撤送装置等に用いられる。

搬送路が分岐部を有する搬送システムの分岐方式として、たとえば、シフタ方式とターンテーブル方式が知られている。

シフタ方式は、第6図に示すように、分岐部に、 図面中左右方向に移動可能に図示された、シフタ 50を設け、その上に2種類以上の分岐レール5 1及び52を設ける。たとえば、シフタの一関に はレール53、他側にはレール54、55が配置 されている。 放送台車(図示せず)がレール53 とレール54との間を移動する場合は、シフタ5 ○を左方向へ移動して、シフタ5○上の右側レール51をレール53とレール54との間に配置して、シフタ5○上の右側レール53からレール53からレール53からは、シフタ5○を持続する。シフタの両側でレール55を接続する。シフタの両側では、ロ:mでよい。作業工程上は、安全白車を存止さず、フタの近くまでは、搬送台車を存止させ、シフタを希望位置に移動してから搬送台車を再配動する。

第7図はターンテーブル方式の分岐部を示す。 回転可能なテーブル60上のレールはテーブル6 0に接する搬送路レール61、62、63のいずれにも接続可能である、搬送台車64を一旦このテーブル60上のレールに載せ、このテーブル6 0の回転により、搬送台車64の進行方向を変える。分岐部に3通りのレールが会合する場合を示したが、任意のn通りのレールが会合してもよい。搬送台車はテーブル上で停止させる必要があり、

#### [発明が解決しようとする課題]

このような従来の搬送装置の分岐方式では、通常設送台車を分岐部の手前で一旦停止させた後、分岐動作を開始させる。また、第7図の場合は分岐部内においてもターンテーブルの回転を行うための時間が必要である。このためサイクルタイムがさらに長くなる。

また、分岐部内に可動機構があるのでそのメイ ンテナンスが必要となり、故障の原因となる。

本発明の目的は、分岐部での撤送を迅速に行い、 サイクルタイムを短縮することができるリニア誘 寡モータ式搬送システムを提供することである。

本発明の他の目的は、分岐部内に可動機構を必要としないリニア誘導モータ式搬送システムを提供することである。

#### [課題を解決するための手段]

本発明のリニア誘導モータ式機送システムによれば、支持ローラが支持される基準面より上方にガイド面が設定され、ガイド面内にガイドローラと分岐部ガイド部村とが配置される。機送路の交差部で基準面内の支持ローラが支持を失った時、ガイド面内のガイドローラが分岐部ガイド部村と傾合し、支持を確保して、機送台車の落下を防止する。

第1図(A)、(B)、(C)に本発明の基本 概念を示す。

第1図(A)を参照して説明すると、通常時の 搬送システムは、フレーム9aと、その両側面に 配置されたリニア誘導モータ2a, 2bと、フレーム9aに支持された支持ローラ4a, 4b及び ガイドローラ3a, 3bとを有する搬送台車1と、 各リニア誘導モータに対向して設けられた2次側 導体5a, 5bと、支持ローラ4a, 4bを支持 する支持部材7a, 7bと、ガイドローラ3a, 3bと接するガイド部材6a, 6bを有する搬送 路10とを有する。なお、図示していないが支持ローラの4a、4bの後方には支持ローラ4c、4dがあり、ガイドローラ3a、3bの後方にはガイドローラ3c、3dがあるものとする。

さらに、第1図(B)に示すような搬送路10の分岐部に於いては、分岐する搬送台車1の連結部材9cの通過を許すためには点線で示す部分に支持部材は配置できない。すると、そのままでは 搬送台車の支持ローラの一方、たとえば4bは支持を失い、搬送台車1が落下してしまう。

第1図(C)に示すように、撤送台車1が搬送 路10bに分岐する際に分岐方向に対して反対側 のガイドローラ3bと接するように分岐部ガイド 部材8bが基準面より上のガイド面内に設けられ る。同様に、搬送路10cに分岐する際のための 分岐部ガイド部材8aが設けられている。

搬送路10は垂直部材5a、5bと該垂直部材の上下両端に接続する上水平部材6a、6bと下水平部材7a、7bとを有するコの字または1の字形の断面を有する搬送路部材を有し、垂直部材

交差部内側では搬送路の支持部材は切り欠かれ ているのでそこで支持ローラは支持を失う。しか し、基準面と異なる高さのガイド面内に設けられ たガイド部材8a、8bがガイドローラ3a、3 b と 当接 して 支持力を発揮することにより 撤送台 車1は保持される。 図示の場合、前方右側の支 持ローラ4bが支持部材7bを外れる前に、ガイ ドローラ3bが分岐都ガイド都材8bに当接する。 前のガイドローラ3bが分岐部ガイド部材8bに 係合した後、支持ローラ4bが支持を失う。また 後方右側の支持ローラ4dが支持を失う前にガイ ドローラ3dが分岐都ガイド部材8bに当接する。 このようにして 撤送台車1が搬送路10 aから撤 送路10bに移行する、この間主として右側のガ イドローラ3b, 3d及び左側の支持ローラ4a. 4 c はそれぞれ分岐部ガイド部材 8 b 及び支持部 材7aと当接している。

支持ローラ4b、4dと支持部材7bとの係合、ガイドローラ3b、3dと分岐部ガイド部材8bのガイド面の係合の全てが失われないかぎり、撤

5 a、5 b はリニア誘導モータ 2 a、 2 b と対向 する導体を有し、下水平部材 7 a、 7 b の上面は 支持ローラ 4 a、 4 b の支持面を形成し、上水平 部材 6 a、 6 b の端面はガイドローラ 3 a、 3 b に対するガイド面を形成するのが好ましい。

#### [作用]

第1図(B)を参照して説明すると、上述のような搬送路部材により構成される搬送路10a上を数に向かってか成の1方向(たとえば第1図と、上述のより構成される搬送行させるための1方向(たとえば第1図と、分岐の1のリニア誘導モータ2aはからの分岐のリニア誘導モータ2aはからの最近なれたリニア誘導モータ2aはからなりに、機送台下は、短いで、第1回図に、からにして、第1回図に、大力に、なった分岐部において、数送台には、大力によって移動する。

送台車1は落下しないように設計することができ g

また、少なくとも上述の4つの係合のうち2つは保持されるように設計することもできる。 ガイドローラを小さくすると、上方の水平部材 6 と分岐部ガイド部材 8 とのギャップを小さくすることができる。

#### [実施例]

以下、図面を参照して本発明の実施例を説明す

第2図(A)および(B)は本発明の一実施例によるリニア誘導モータ式搬送システムに用いる機送台車を示し、第2図(A)は第2図(B)のIIA-IIA線に沿う矢視正面図、第2図(B)は第2図(A)のIIB-IIB線に沿う矢視平面図である。これらの図において、機送システムは搬送台車11と搬送路10を含み、機送台車11は搬送路10に沿って走行して部品等の被搬送物(図示せず)を搬送する。

版送台車11はは、フレーム19aと、海の両側面に設けられたリニア品がの12a、12bと、部本を関係の112bと、部本を関係の112bと、部本を対した。のでは、19bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、部本が110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、の110bと、110b

銀送路10は、2本の「形断面を有する「型部材30a、30bを有する。各「形部材30a、30bを有する。各「形部材30a、30bは垂直部材25a、25bと、この垂直部材25a、25bの上下に固定された2つの上水平部材26a、26bと、下水平部材27a、2

7 bを有し、上水平部材26a,26bが屋内架台35に固定される。垂直部材25a,25bはアルミニウム等の導体と鉄等の磁性体を有し、リニア誘導モータ12a,12bと対向してリニア誘導モータ12a,12bの2次関導体を構成する。なお、垂直部材25は、必ずしも磁性体を含まなくてもよいが、少なくとも分岐部周辺においては吸引力を発生させるために鉄などの磁性材料を含むことが必要である。

機送台車11の支持ローラ14は、「形部材3 0の下水平部材27a、27bの上面24a、2 4bに支持されて、搬送台車1を支持する。また、 上ガイドローラ15は上水平部材26a、26b の内側端面28a、28bに当接し、下ガイドローラ16は下水平部材27a、27bの内側端面 29a、29bに当接してリニア講導モータ12 と'2次側導体25との間のギャップを一定に保っている。

機送台車11はさらに、図示しない集電装置、制御装置等を有する。集電装置は搬送路10ある

いは 1 形部材 3 0 に設けられる図示しないトロリ線から交流電圧を取り入れる。

なお、1形断面を有する I 形部材を用いる場合を説明したが、 I 形部材の代わりに、コの字形部材を両側から付き合わせるように用いてもよい。同様に、垂直部材の上方には両側に突出する水平部材を有し、下方に内側にのみ突出する水平部材を有する構造材を用いることもできる。

本実施例の場合、上下に案内部材を設けたことにより、搬送台車の運動が安定化される。

Y字形等の分岐点において、搬送台車の通過のため搬送路の支持面を切り欠き、切り欠き部で支持車輪が一部支持を失う構成にした時、以下に説明するように、上案内車輪を上水平部材の端面と係合させておくことにより支持力を確保し、搬送台車が落下することを防ぐことができる。

第3図(A).(B)第4図(A).(B)は 搬送路10の分岐部の1形態を示す。第3図(A) (B)が正面縦断面図で第4図(A).(B)中 皿A-皿Aおよび皿B-皿Bの線に沿う矢視図、 第4図(A)。(B)は平面断面図で第3図(A) (B)のIVA — IV AおよびIVB — IV Bの線に沿う 矢視図である。

第3図(A)は単独撤送路の部分の縦断面図、第3図(B)は分岐部分の縦断面図である。分岐部分に差し掛かると両側の『形部材30a、30bが離れ、間隔が広くなる。分岐部においては、上水平部材26a、26bが画定するガイド面内に分岐部ガイド部材36、38が設けられる。 放送台車11の上ガイドローラ15と当接する分岐部ガイド面37、39をその関面に形成して、支持を与える。

第4図(A)は第3図(A)、(B)のⅣA一ⅣA線で示した上水平部村内を通るガイド面から下方を見た平面図である。機送路10aから搬送路10b、10cが分岐しており、上水平部村26aと26bとが次第に離れ、新たに上水平部村26c、26dが設けられている。分岐部内には、上述の分岐部ガイド部村36、38が設けられている。これらの分岐部ガイド部村は上水平部村が

なくなる部分で、上水平部材と同等の役割を果た そうとするものである。

第4図(B)は第3図(A)、(B)のIVBーIVB線に沿う中間面から下方を見た平面図であり、下水平部材の支持面の形状を示す。下水平部材25は上水平部材26と同様の形状を有する。第2図(A)に示す連結部材19cのような部材の通過を許すため、分岐部の中央部は何もない空間であり、第4図(A)に示した分岐部ガイド部材に対応する部材を配置することはできない。

次に、第5図(A)、(B)、(C)を参照して、以上の構成を有する機送システムにより、搬送台車11がⅠ形部材30 a、30 bにより構成される搬送路10 aからⅠ形部材30 d、30 bにより構成される搬送路10 c へ分岐する際の動作を説明する。

搬送路10 a 上を分岐部の手前まで走行してきた搬送台車11の、分岐方向(図の場合は下側)のリニア誘導モータ(第2図(A)、(B)12 b 参照)を励磁したまま反対側のリニア誘導モー

材3 0 dのガイド面に当接して、搬送台車11が完全に1形部材30b、30dにより構成される機送路10cに移行する。この間、左側のガイドローラ15b、15d及び左側の支持ローラ14b、14dはそれぞれ常に1形部材30bのガイド面及び支持面と当接している。このようにして、機送台車1が落下することなく分岐部を進行することができる。

以上図面に示した実施例に基づいて本発明を説明したが、本発明はこれには限定されず、請求項に記載した範囲内で種々変形可能である。

例えば、 復送路を 2 つの I 形部材で構成したが、 2 つのコの字形部材や他の構造の部材で構成する こともできる。 優送台車の支持方式として支持ロ ーラを用いる場合を説明したが、他の支持方式例 えばエアペアリグ、磁気ペアリングなどを用いて もよい。

また、ガイドローラ15、16が、厳送台車のフレーム19aに設けられている例を示したが、 直接リニア誘導モータ12に設けてもよい。キャ タ(第2図(A)、(B)12a参照)の励磁を切る。すると、第5図(A)に示すように、、励磁されたリニア誘導モータ12bは推力と共にの引力を発生し、 版送台車1を下方へ移動させる。 的方右関のガイドローラ15aが I 形部村30aのガイド面から離れて、 すぐに分岐部ガイド部村36に当接する。 ガイドローラ15aが所方右側のいた おおっちに 対ける は、 まだ前方右側のいた は、 まだ前ののなけのように支持ローラ14、ガイドローラ15の取り付け位置を設計しておく。

前方右側のガイドローラ15 a によって 撤送台車 1 1 の重力を支えて進行していくと、第5 図 (B) に示すように、後方右側のガイドローラ1 5 c が 1 形部材 3 0 a のガイド面から離れ、直ぐに分岐部ガイド部材 3 6 と当接する。

次いで、第5図(C)に示すように、前方右側のガイドローラ15aが1形部材30dのガイド面に当接し、搬送台車11は搬送路10cに入る。最後に、後方右側のガイドローラ15cが1形部

リア19bの支持方式として懸架式のものを示したが、内臓式等のものでもよい。

#### [発明の効果]

本発明のリニア誘導モータ式機送システムによれば、機送路の分岐部の手前あるいは分岐部内で 撤送台車を停止する必要がないので、搬送台車が 迅速に分岐部を通過することができ、サイクルタ イムを知経することができる。

また、分岐部に可動機構部がないのでメインテナンスを必要とせず、かつ機送台の分岐部での定行を確実に行うことができる。

#### 4. 図面の簡単な説明

第1図(A),(B)、(C)は本発明の基本 概念を示す図であり、第1図(A)と(C)は通 常時と分岐時の正面図、第1図(B)は分岐部の 平面図、

第2図(A)。(B)は本発明の実施例による 搬送システムに用いる搬送台車を示す図で、第2

## 特閒平3-7003 (6)

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第5図(A)、(B)、(C)は搬送台車が分 核部を通過する際の動作を説明するため、3つの 状態を示す平面機略図、

第6回は従来の撤送装置の分岐方式の一例を示す半面図。

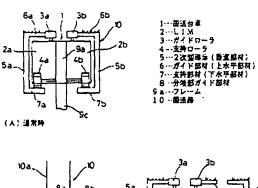
第7回は従来の分岐方式の他の例を示す料視図である。

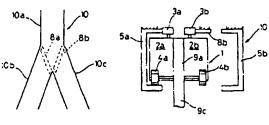
#### 図において、

- 1 搬送台車、
- 2 L I M
- 3 ガイドローラ
- 4 支持ローラ

- 5 2次侧導体(垂直部材)
- 6 ガイド部材(上水平部材)
- 7 支持部材(下水平部材)
- 8 分歧部ガイド部村
- 9 a フレーム
- 10. 搬送路
- 1 1 搬送台車
- 12 LIM
- 14 支持ローラ
- 15 上ガイドローラ
- 16 下ガイドローラ
- 198 フレーム
- 195 キャリア
- 25 垂直部材
- 26 上水平部材
- 27 下水平部材
- 28,29 端面(ガイド面)
- 3.5 屋内架台
- 36,38 分岐部ガイド部村

復代理人 弁理士 高精祉四郎

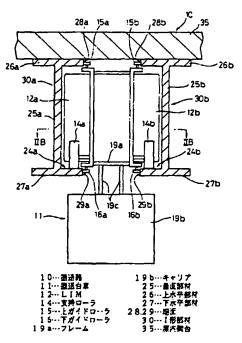




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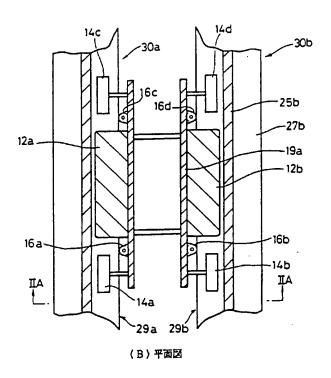
本発明の高本表念 第 1 図

(3) 分歧整理送路

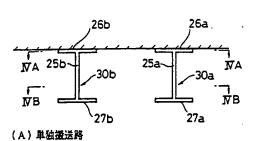


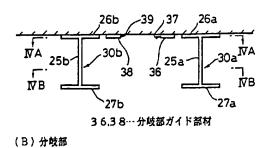
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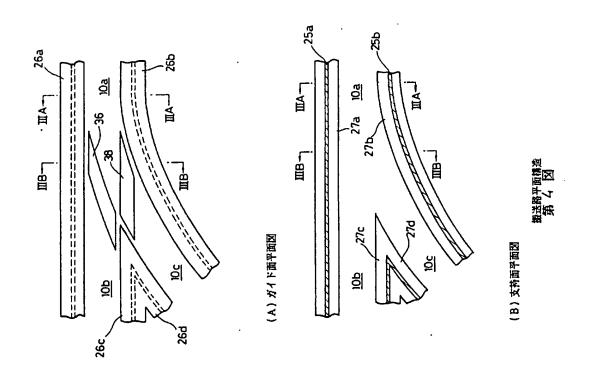


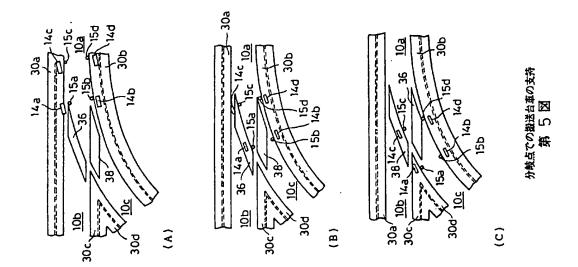
本発明の実施例による搬送台車 第 2 図(その2)

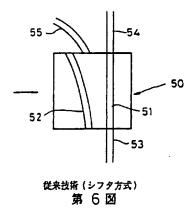


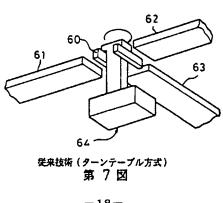


报送路断面構造 第 3 図









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LINEAR INDUCTION MOTOR CARRIER SYSTEM

Jun Senda

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE WASHINGTON, D.C. JULY 2003
TRANSLATED BY THE RALPH MCELROY TRANSLATION COMPANY

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# LINEAR INDUCTION MOTOR CARRIER SYSTEM

[Rinia yodo mota shiki hanso shisutemu]

Inventor: Jun Senda

Applicant: Sumitomo Heavy Industries, Ltd.

[There are no amendments to this patent.]

## Claims

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1. A linear induction motor carrier system characterized in that it is equipped with a carrier cart having a structure comprising supporting rollers supported on reference surfaces and guiding rollers provided on guiding surfaces provided at a different height from that of the reference surfaces, a pair of linear induction motors provided on either side of the aforementioned structure, and a carrier provided below the reference surfaces while supported by the aforementioned structure;

<sup>\* [</sup>Editor's note: Numbers in the right margin represent pagination in the original foreign language text.]

a carrier track having secondary conductors facing the respective linear induction motors, supporting members which support the supporting rollers at the reference surfaces as they come into contact with the supporting rollers, and magnetic secondary conductors for branching at a junction utilizing the electromotive force of a linear induction motor; and

junction part guiding members provided within the aforementioned guiding surfaces at the junction of the aforementioned carrier track which come into contact with applicable guiding rollers so as to generate a supporting force at least during the period in which the supporting rollers of the carrier cart are apart from the supporting members when the carrier track is branched.

2. The linear induction motor carrier system described in Claim 1 characterized in that the aforementioned carrier track has a structure which contains first horizontal members provided within the aforementioned reference surfaces while connected to the lower ends of said vertical members and second horizontal members provided within the aforementioned guiding surfaces while connected to the upper ends of said vertical members, the vertical members have secondary conductors facing the linear inductance motors, the upper horizontal surfaces of the first horizontal members constitute the supporting surfaces, and vertical inner end surfaces of the second horizontal members constitute the guiding surfaces.

# Detailed explanation of the invention

Industrial application field

The present invention pertains to a carrier system utilizing linear inductance motors (LIM). In particular, it pertains to a carrier system in which a carrier cart travels on a carrier track containing junctions.

Prior art

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A linear induction motor configured by cutting and unfolding an induction motor has a structure in which a primary coil serving as a power supply and a secondary conductor serving to receive the power are provided facing each other via a gap. A thrust is created by a traveling magnetic field generated by applying an AC current to the primary side and an eddy current generated on the secondary conductor by said traveling magnetic field. A conductor and a magnetic body are often combined to create the secondary side. Either the primary or the secondary side can be made movable when used for a pallet carrier device, for example. A shifter system and a turntable system, for example, are available as branching methods for a carrier system in which the carrier track contains junctions.

As shown in Figure 6, in the case of the shifter system, shifter 50 which can be moved laterally as illustrated in the figure is provided at a junction, and 2 or more kinds of branching

rails 51 and 52 are provided on it. For example, rail 53 is provided on one side of the shifter, and rails 54 and 55 are provided on the other side. When a carrier cart (not illustrated) travels between rail 53 and rail 54, shifter 50 is moved to the left so as to bring rail 51 on the right side of shifter 50 to the position between rail 53 and rail 54 in order to connect the rails together. To move from rail 53 to rail 55, shifter 50 is moved to the right in order to connect rail 53 with rail 55 using rail 52 on the left side of shifter 50. Although a case in which the numbers of the rails on either side of the shifter are 1:2 was shown above, in general, [the ratio] may be expressed as n.m. In terms of operation steps, the carrier cart is stopped as the carrier cart approaches the shifter, the shifter is moved to a desired position, and the carrier cart is driven again for the sake of safety.

Figure 7 shows a junction in the case of the turntable system. The rail provided on turnable table 60 can be connected to any of carrier track rails 61, 62, or 63 connected to table 60. Carrier cart 64 is placed on said table 60 once, and the direction carrier cart 64 travels is changed by turning said table 60. Although a case in which 3 rails meet at the junction part was shown above, arbitrary n kinds of rails may meet there. The carrier cart needs to be stopped on the table. Usually, the carrier cart is stopped at a point before the table, and it is led onto the table slowly.

# Problem to be solved by the invention

With said conventional carrier cart branching methods, usually, the branching operation begins after the carrier cart is stopped before a junction part. In addition, in Figure 7, the time for the turntable to turn at the junction part is also needed. Thus, the operation cycle gets longer.

In addition, because the turning mechanism is provided inside of the junction part, if maintenance is needed, it will result in a cause of malfunctioning.

The purpose of the present invention is to present a linear induction motor carrier system by which the carriage at the junction part can be carried out promptly in order to reduce the operation cycle.

Another purpose of the present invention is to present a linear induction motor carrier system which does not required any turning mechanism inside of the junction part.

# Means to solve the problem

In the linear induction motor carrier system of the present invention, the guiding surfaces are placed higher than the reference surfaces where the supporting rollers are supported, and the guiding rollers and the junction part guiding members are provided within the guiding surfaces. When the supporting rollers lose their support at a junction area along the carrier track, the guiding rollers in the guiding surfaces snap to the junction part guiding members to secure the support in order to prevent the carrier cart from falling off.

The basic concept of the present invention is illustrated in Figure 1 (A), (B), and (C). For an explanation with reference to Figure 1 (A), in the normal condition, the carrier system has carrier cart 1 having frame 9a, linear induction motors 2a and 2b provided on either side of it, supporting rollers 4a and 4b supported by frame 9a, and guiding rollers 3a and 3b and carrier track 10 having secondary conductors 5a and 5b facing the respective linear induction motors, supporting members 7a and 7b which support supporting rollers 4a and 4b, and guiding members 6a and 6b in contact with guiding rollers 3a and 3b. Furthermore, although they are not

illustrated, it is assumed that supporting rollers 4c and 4d are provided in the rear of supporting rollers 4a and 4b, and guiding rollers 3c and 3d are provided in the rear of guiding rollers 3a and

/3

Furthermore, at a junction area of carrier track 10 of the kind shown in Figure 1 (B), no supporting member can be provided at the part indicated by the broken line in order to allow coupling member 9c of branching carrier cart 1 to pass. As such, if it is kept the way it is, one of the supporting roller, for example, 4b, of the carrier cart loses its support, and carrier cart 1 ends up falling off.

As shown in Figure 1 (C), junction part guiding member 8b is provided within the guiding surface placed higher than the reference surface, so that carrier cart 1 makes contact with guiding roller 3b provided on the opposite side to the branching direction when it is branched to carrier track 10b. Similarly, junction part guiding member 8a is provided for branching to carrier track 10c.

It is preferable that carrier track 10c has carrier track members each having a ]-shaped or I-shaped cross section comprising vertical members 5a and 5b and upper horizontal members 6a and 6b and lower upper horizontal members 7a and 7b connected to the upper and the lower ends of said vertical members; vertical members 5a and 5b have conductors facing linear induction motors 2a and 2b; upper surfaces of lower horizontal members 7a and 7b form the surfaces for supporting supporting rollers 4a and 4b; and the end surfaces of upper horizontal members 6a and 6b form the surfaces for guiding guiding rollers 3a and 3b.

#### **Function**

3b.

In reference to Figure 1 (B), to let carrier cart 1, which has traveled downward on carrier track 10a configured with the aforementioned carrier track member to a point before the junction, advance to one of the branching directions (for example, to carrier track 10b provided on the left side in Figure 1 (B)), while linear induction motor 2a in the branching direction in Figure 1 (A) is being exited, excitation of linear induction motor 2b provided on the opposite side is cut off. Excited linear induction motor 2a generates a thrust and an electromotive force in order to direct carrier cart 1 in the direction of secondary conductor 5a (to the left in the figure). As such, as

shown in Figure 1 (C), carrier cart 1 moves along secondary conductor 5a provided on the left at the broadened junction part.

Because the supporting members of the carrier track are cut off within the intersection, the supporting rollers lose their support there. However, because guiding members 8a and 8b provided within the guiding surfaces placed at a different height from that of the reference surfaces come into contact with guiding rollers 3a and 3b to provide a supporting force, carrier cart 1 is sustained. In the case illustrated here, guiding roller 3b comes into contact with junction part guiding member 8b before supporting roller 4b provided on the right front side comes off supporting member 7b. After front guiding roller 3b snapped to junction part guiding member 8b, supporting roller 4b loses its support. In addition, guiding roller 3d comes into contact with junction part guiding member 8b before supporting roller 4d provided on the right back side loses its support. Carrier cart 1 travels from carrier track 10a to carrier track 10b in said manner. In the meantime, guiding rollers 3b and 3d on the right and supporting rollers 4a and 4c on the left are mostly in contact with junction part guiding member 8b and supporting member 7a, respectively.

Carrier cart 1 can be designed as such that it never falls off unless the contact between supporting rollers 4b and 4d and supporting member 7b and the contact between guiding rollers 3b and 3d and the guiding surface of junction part guiding member 8b are completely lost.

In addition, it can be also designed such that at least 2 of the aforementioned 4 contacts can be maintained. The gaps between upper horizontal members 6 and junction part guiding members 8 can be reduced by reducing the size of the guiding rollers.

# Application example

An application example of the present invention will be explained below with reference to the figures.

Figure 2 (A) and (B) illustrate the carrier cart used for the linear induction motor carrier system of the application example of the present invention, Figure 2 (A) is a front view of Figure 2 (B) along line IIA-IIA indicated by the arrows, and Figure 2 (B) is a plan view of Figure 2 (A) along line IIB-IIB indicated by the arrows. In the figures, the carrier system includes carrier cart 11 and carrier track 10, and carrier cart 11 travels along carrier track 10 in order to carry items, such as parts (not illustrated).

Carrier cart 11 has frame 19a, linear induction motors (LIM) 12a and 12b provided on either side of frame 19a, carrier 19b for carrying items, such as parts, and coupling member 19c for hanging carrier 19b from frame 19a. Linear induction motors 12 each contains a magnetic core made of iron and a coil and generate a traveling magnetic field as they are driven using a 3-phase AC current. Supporting rollers 14 with a large diameter which provide the primary supporting force are provided at the lower part of frame 19a, upper guiding rollers 15 with a

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small diameter are provided at the top, and lower guiding rollers 16 with a small diameter are provided at the bottom similarly in order to define its position in the horizontal direction accurately. As is clear from the plan view in Figure 2 (B), 4 each of these supporting rollers 14 and guiding rollers 15 and 16 are provided in all directions of carrier cart 1 [sic; 11].

Carrier track 10 has 2 I-shaped members 30a and 30b having an I-shaped cross section. I-shaped members 30a and 30b have vertical members 25a and 25b and 2 upper horizontal members 26a and 26b and [2] lower horizontal members 27a and 27b fixed to the top and the bottom of said vertical members 25a and 25b, and upper horizontal members 26a and 26b are fixed to rack 35. Vertical members 25a and 25b are provided with a conductor made of aluminum, for example, and a magnetic body made of iron, for example, and placed to face linear induction motors 12a and 12b so as to constitute secondary conductors of linear induction motors 12a and 12b. Furthermore, although vertical members 25 do not have to contain magnetic bodies, they need at least to have a magnetic material, such as iron, in order to generate an electromotive force near the junction area.

Supporting roller 14 of carrier cart 11 are supported by upper surfaces 24a and 24b of lower horizontal members 27a and 27b of I-shaped members 30 so as to support carrier cart 11. In addition, upper guiding rollers 15 are in contact with inner end surfaces 28a and 28b of upper horizontal members 26a and 26b, and lower guiding rollers 16 are in contact with inner end surfaces 29a and 29b of lower horizontal members 27a and 27b in order to maintain the gaps between linear induction motors 12 and secondary conductors 25 constant.

Carrier cart 11 is further provided with a collector device and a controller device not illustrated. The collector device takes in an AC voltage through a trolley line (not illustrated) provided to carrier track 10 or I-shaped members 30.

Furthermore, although a case involving I-shaped members having an I-shaped cross section was explained above, ]-shaped members may be placed to face each other in place of the I-shaped members. Similarly, a structure in which horizontal members are provided at the top of vertical members while protruding to either side, and horizontal members protruding only inward are provided at the bottom may also be utilized.

In the case of the present application example, because the guiding members are provided at the top as well as at the bottom, movements of the carrier cart can be stabilized.

When a structure in which the supporting surfaces of the carrier track are cut off at a Y-shaped junction, for example, in order for the carrier cart to pass, and the carrier cart loses its support partially at the cut-off part is adopted the supporting force can be secured by snapping the upper guiding rollers to the end surfaces of the upper horizontal members, so that the carrier cart can be prevented from falling off as will be explained later.

Figure 3 (A) and (B) and Figure 4 (A) and (B) illustrate an embodiment of the junction part of carrier track 10. Figure 3 (A) and (B) are front cross sectional views along lines IIIA-IIIA and IIIB-IIIB indicated by the arrows in Figure 4 (A) and (B). Figure 4 (A) and (B) are plan cross sectional views along lines IVA-IVA and IVB-IVB indicated by the arrows in Figure 3 (A) and (B).

Figure 3 (A) is a vertical cross sectional view of a part involving a single carrier track, and Figure 3 (B) is a vertical cross sectional view of a junction part. I-shaped members 30a and 30b are separated so as to broaden the gap between them as [the carrier cart] approaches the junction part. At the junction part, junction part guiding members 36 and 38 are provided within guiding surfaces demarked by upper horizontal members 26a and 26b. Junction part guiding surfaces 37 and 39 to be brought into contact with upper guiding rollers 15 of carrier cart 11 are formed on their side surfaces in order provide support.

Figure 4 (A) is a plan view when looking downward from the guiding surfaces within the upper horizontal members as indicated by the IVA-IVA line in Figure 3 (A) and (B). Carrier tracks 10b and 10c are branched out from carrier track 10a, upper horizontal members 26a and 26b are separated gradually, and upper horizontal members 26c and 26d are provided newly. Aforementioned junction part guiding members 36 and 38 are provided within the junction part. These junction part guiding members are used to achieve a function equivalent to that of the upper horizontal members at the part where the upper horizontal members disappear.

Figure 4 (B) is a plan view when looking downward from the intermediate surface along the IVB-IVB line in Figure 3 (A) and (B); wherein, the shapes of the supporting surfaces of the lower horizontal members are shown. Lower horizontal members 25 have the same shapes as those upper horizontal members 26. An empty space is created at the center of the junction part in order to allow a member, such as coupling member 9c shown in Figure 2 (A), to pass, so that members corresponding to the junction part guiding members shown in Figure 4 (A) can not be provided there.

Next, in reference to Figure 5 (A), (B), and (C), operations of the carrier system with the aforementioned configuration to be carried out when carrier cart 11 is branched from carrier track 10a configured with I-shaped members 30a and 30b to carrier track 10c configured with I-shaped members 30d and 30b [sic.; 30c] will be explained.

As carrier cart 11 has traveled on carrier track 10a to reach a point just before the junction part, while the linear induction motor (refer to 12b in Figure 1 (A) and (B)) in the branching direction is kept excited, excitation of the linear induction motor (refer to 12a in Figure 1 (A) and (B)) on the other side is cut off. As a result, as shown in Figure 5 (A), excited linear induction motor 12b generates a thrust and an electromotive force in order to direct carrier cart 1 [sic; 11] downward. Guiding roller 15a provided at the front right side is separated from the guiding

15

surface of I-shaped member 30a and brought into contact with junction part guiding member 36 immediately. The positions supporting rollers 14 and guiding rollers 15 are designed such that supporting roller 14a provided at the front right side is not yet separated from supporting surface 30a when guiding roller 15a comes into contact with junction part guiding member 36.

As carrier cart 11 advances while its weight is supported by guiding roller 15a provided at the front right side, as shown in Figure 5 (B), guiding roller 15c provided at the rear right side is separated from the guiding surface of I-shaped member 30a and brought into contact with junction part guiding member 36 immediately.

Next, as shown in Figure 5(C), guiding roller 15a provided at the front right side comes into contact with the guiding surface of I-shaped member 30d, and carrier cart 11 enters carrier track 10c. Finally, guiding roller 15c provided at the rear right side comes into contact with the guiding surface of I-shaped member 30d. As a result, carrier cart 11 enters completely into carrier track 10c configured with I-shaped members 30b and 30d. In the meantime, guiding rollers 15b and 15d and supporting rollers 14b and 14d provided on the left side remain in contact with the guiding surface and the supporting surface of I-shaped member 30b, respectively. Carrier cart 1 can travel through the junction part without falling out in said manner.

Although the present invention was explained above based on the application example illustrated in the figures, the present invention is not restricted to said [application example, and it can be modified in a variety of ways without going beyond the scope described under Claims.

For example, although the carrier track was configured with 2 I-shaped members, it may be configured using 2 ]-shaped members or members with a different structure also. Although a case in which supporting rollers were utilized as a means for supporting the carrier car was explained, other supporting systems, for example, air bearings and magnetic bearings, may be utilized also.

In addition, although a case in which guiding rollers 15 and 16 were provided at frame 19a of the carrier cart was explained, they may be provided directly at linear induction motors 12. Although a hanging rack type was introduced as a system for supporting carrier 19b, a built-in type may also be utilized.

#### Effect of the invention

With the linear induction motor carrier system of the present invention, because there is no need to stop the carrier cart at a point before or within the junction area of the carrier track, the carrier cart can pass through the junction area quickly, so that the operation cycle can be reduced.

In addition, because there is no moving part involved at the junction area, the carrier cart can travel though the junction area reliably without requiring any maintenance.

# Brief description of the figures

Figure 1 (A), (B), and (C) are diagrams illustrating the basic concept of the present invention; wherein, Figure 1 (A) and (C) are front views of the normal condition and the branching condition, and Figure 1 (C) is a plan view of the junction part.

Figure 2 (A) and (B) are diagrams showing the carrier cart used for the carrier system in the application example of the present invention; wherein, Figure 2 (A) sis a front view, and Figure 2 (B) is a plan view.

Figure 3 (A) and (B) illustrate the cross sectional structure of the carrier track; wherein, Figure 3 (A) is a cross sectional view of the single carrier track part, and Figure 3 (B) is a cross sectional view of the junction part.

Figure 4 (A) and (B) illustrate the planar structure of the carrier track; wherein, Figure 4 (A) is a plan view of the guiding surface, and Figure 4 (B) is a plan view of the supporting surface.

Figure 5 (A), (B), and (C) are outline plan views of 3 conditions for illustrating the operations of the carrier cart when it passes through the junction part.

Figure 6 is a plan view illustrating an example branching system of a conventional carrier device.

Figure 7 is an oblique view illustrating another example of the conventional branching system.

In the figures,

- 1 Carrier cart
- 2 LIM
- 3 Guiding roller
- 4 Supporting roller
- 5 Secondary conductor (vertical member)
- 6 Guiding member (upper horizontal member)
- 7 Supporting member (lower horizontal member)
- 8 Junction part guiding member
- 9a Frame
- 10 Carrier track
- 11 Carrier cart
- 12 LIM
- 14 Supporting roller
- 15 Upper guiding roller
- 16 Lower guiding roller

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- 19a Frame
- 19b Carrier
- 25 Vertical member
- 26 Upper horizontal member
- 27 Lower horizontal member
- 28, 29 End surface (guiding surface)
- 35 Rack
- 36, 38 Junction part guiding member

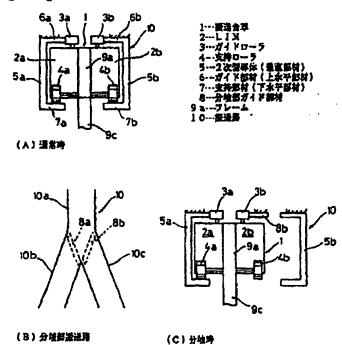


Figure 1. Basic concept of the present invention

- Key: (A) Under the normal condition
  - (B) Carrier track at junction part
  - (C) During branching
  - 1 Carrier cart
  - 2 LIM
  - 3 Guiding roller
  - 4 Supporting roller
  - 5 Secondary conductor (vertical member)
  - 6 Guiding member (upper horizontal member)
  - 7 Supporting member (lower horizontal member)
  - 8 Junction part guiding member
  - 9a Frame
  - 10 Carrier track

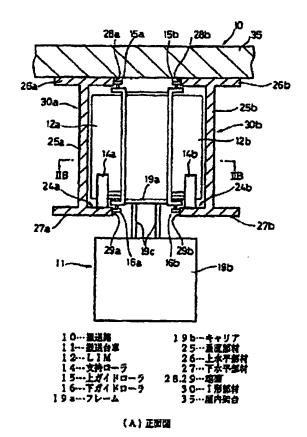


Figure 2 (Part 1). Carrier cart in accordance with the application example of the present invention

Kcy:	(A)	Front view
	10	Carrier track
	11	Carrier cart
	12	LIM
	14	Supporting roller
	15	Upper guiding roller
	16	Lower guiding roller
	19a	Frame
	19b	Carrier
	25	Vertical member
	26	Upper horizontal member
	27	Lower horizontal member
	28, 29	End surface
•	30	I-shaped member
	35	Rack

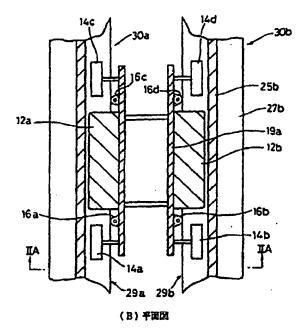
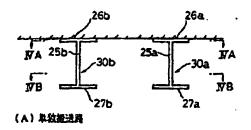


Figure 2 (Part 2). Carrier cart in accordance with the application example of the present invention

# Key: (B) Plan view



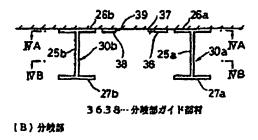
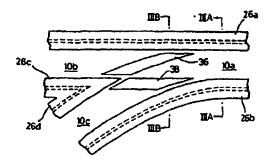


Figure 3. Cross sectional structure of carrier track

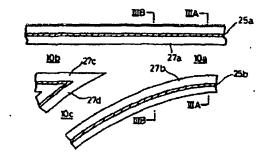
Key: (A) Single carrier track

(B) Junction part

36, 38. Junction part guiding member



# (人)ガイド両平面院



# (B) 女特面华面部

Figure 4. Planar structure of carrier track

Key: (A)

Plan view of guiding surface Plan view of supporting surface (B)

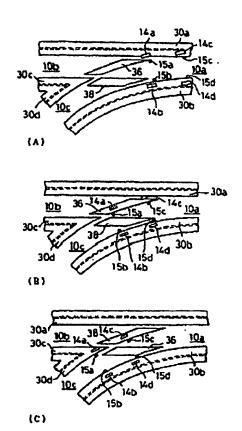


Figure 5. Support for carrier cart at junction

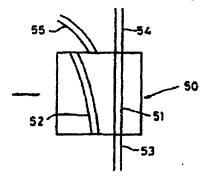


Figure 6. Prior art (shifter system)

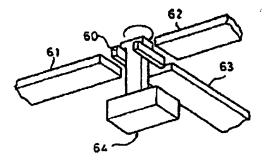


Figure 7. Prior art (turntable system)